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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Vietnam

SUBJECT Interview with Phan Huy Dan, Former Political Adviser of Bao Dai and Former Leader of Vietnam Anti-Communist Popular Movement/Dan's Views on France-Vietnam and on Vietnamese Congress

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- "In 1945-46 I was the leader of the Vietnam Anti-Communist Popular Movement, which in February 1946 organized mass meetings and demonstrations to demand the withdrawal of the Communist government of Ho Chi Minh and its replacement by a nationalist government which would be headed by Vinh Thuy (Bao Dai's 'citizen name'). When the French signed with Ho Chi Minh the agreement of 6 Mar 46, we were compelled to go to China. I became the political adviser of Bao Dai and remained so, officially, until March 1949. During that period I participated in all the negotiations with the French.
- "In May 1948, in order to avoid a rupture with the French which would result from endless and unsuccessful negotiations without any effort of practical co-operation, I promoted the idea of creating the first national government of Vietnam to replace the three local governments which at that time governed separately the three regions or 'kys' of Vietnam.
- "As Minister of Information in that first Vietnamese national government, I created the first Vietnamese news agency known as 'Vietnam Presse' and organized over 50 civic schools to teach the population elements of democracy and to point out to them the fallacy of Communism.
- "I resigned in March 1949 when Bao Dai signed the Agreement of 8 Mar 49, which I considered as unsatisfactory & unable to rally the Vietnamese people.
- "I have since then refused many offers of the post of Minister of National Defense and of the post of Minister of the Interior.
- "It seems now that France is going to widen the scope of Vietnamese independence, thus offering us [the Vietnamese] the opportunity of cooperating wholeheartedly in the fight against Communism.

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7. "But a new treaty with France will not automatically solve every difficulty. It will be equally important for Vietnam to have a truly representative government capable of rallying all anti-Communist forces in Vietnam. Such a government is of prime and urgent importance to ensure the continuity of the struggle against Communism especially now that in France truce negotiations with the Communists are more and more talked about.
8. "A Vietnamese arbitrary government without popular support and merely backed by the French would bow to any French decision while a Vietnamese representative government could assert its anti-Communist stand and exert an effective influence on French decisions. Without such a Vietnamese government [Vietnamese representative government] the French National Assembly might suddenly decide to give up the fight in Indo-China, as has been clearly expressed by at least one article [published in the US press]. The anti-Communist forces in Indo-China would collapse and all the blood and money spent so far to build them up would have been a horrible nonsense.
9. "The Vietnamese National Congress convened in Saigon last month [October 1953] is a praiseworthy effort toward the organization of a Vietnamese representative government. Worries have been voiced concerning certain 'extremist' motions of that congress. But we should not forget that it is acting as an opposition party against the present government of Saigon, which did not receive any popular approval.
10. "A government coming out from the Congress--and it might be the present one or might at least include some members of the present one--would certainly be more realistic and moderate.
11. "Circumstances are creating ever closer ties between Vietnam and the US. My purpose has always been to help develop understanding and strengthen the friendship between the US and the Vietnamese people. In this connection, you may be interested in the opinion of one Vietnamese on the Vietnam Congress [as follows]:
12. "To defeat Communism, strong popular support is needed. But could there be popular support without popular participation?
13. "Vietnamese governments, appointed and dismissed by decrees, have been ruling without popular participation and without constitution. Any such regime severing itself from the people should not be surprised at finding itself floating like fallen leaves on rough water instead of growing like deep-rooted trees.
14. "The Communists have been outlawed. But why should the anti-Communists also be deprived of their rights to participate in political life?
15. "The Congress movement aborning in Vietnam is being opposed ^{as} ~~as~~ undesirable because it refused to limit its existence to two days and to subscribe to an agenda imposed upon it. Yet what congress would accept such restrictions without losing all its meaning?
16. "I am reminded of another congress which M Emile Bollaert as French High Commissioner in Indo-China tried to organize in 1948. On 5 Dec 47 at the invitation of M Bollaert, Bao Dai went alone to meet him in the Bay of Along. After conferring for two days, they, initialed a secret document known as the 'Protocol of the Bay of Along.'
17. "Bao Dai was assured that by initialing the Protocol he was incurring no responsibility, but was merely giving the document authenticity as basis for further discussions.

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18. "But, as it appeared later, M Bollaert meant to bind Bao Dai to that document for good. Bao Dai, however, at that time was but a Vietnamese refugee in Hong Kong. It was necessary to invest him with some official authority before that Protocol could be produced as a France-Vietnamese agreement.

19. "One month later [January 1948] Bao Dai, assisted by myself and two other Vietnamese advisers, met again with M Bollaert in Geneva, Switzerland. On this occasion we were told that not a comma would be changed in the Protocol and the Bao Dai had signed it and should honor it.

20. "Then on 12 Jan 48 at the Hotel des Bergues, M Bollaert presented us with a letter which suggested the organization of a Vietnamese National Congress to elect Bao Dai as the only qualified representative of Vietnam to carry out negotiations with France. The letter further stated: 'It is my duty to warn Your Majesty of the dangers such a congress would present if precautions were not taken to predetermine its agenda in the most precise way.'

21. "'It must be understood that the session of Congress should not exceed three days and that the Congress should dissolve immediately after having, as its only objective, designated Your Majesty as Vietnam's most qualified representative.'

22. "In particular, it is of the utmost importance to have it clearly stated between us that the Protocol which both of us initialed in the Bay ofAlong on 7 Dec 47, and which determines the future relations of Vietnam with France, will not be revealed at the time of the Congress meeting and that no allusion to it, either direct or indirect, will be publicly made.'

23. "M Bollaert was not given the chance to carry out his stratagem and during the last five years many new French high commissioners have succeeded M Bollaert in Indo-China. But last month [October 1953] that same stratagem has been revived. Similar restrictions have been forced, without success, upon the Vietnamese Congress convened in Saigon.

24. "Shouldn't France and the US favor a democratic government?

25. "Who wouldn't see that it is much easier to deal with a person responsible to no one than to deal with a democratic government responsible to a congress? At the same time when France still wished to maintain her prewar [World War II] policy in Vietnam, it was expected of her, naturally enough to resort now and then to political devices not quite democratic, such as the above-related [stratagem] of M Bollaert.

26. "But now that France has decided to grant complete independence to Vietnam within a French Union, to define liberally, the problem for her [France] should no longer be to maneuver to have her own way in Vietnam by supporting some sort of arbitrary government. She should on the contrary refuse to deal with any such government and should insist that Vietnam have a democratic government able to win strong popular support through a large popular participation.

27. "And shouldn't the US, which is contributing more and more to the defense of Vietnam, attempt a similar attitude?

28. "The Vietnamese people, having suffered too long all kinds of misfortunes, are anxious to get out of the present political confusion and disorder. They strive to have a democratic government able to rally all nationalist forces in an efficient anti-Communist drive to restore peace.

29. "The Vietnamese National Congress, which has been convened in Saigon, is a praiseworthy move towards this end. It should not be chained up. It should be welcome. It should be turned into the first democratic foundation of Vietnam. It should be made into a Vietnamese Constituent Assembly with two principal duties:

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29. "(continued):

a. Designate a Vietnamese government--which may or may not be the present one--and invest it with the responsibility of fighting Communism, negotiating with France, and prepare general elections;

b. Draw up a provisional constitution based on the respect of human dignity and individual liberties."

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